

Consistency in Regulatory Enforcement

Guidance for Inspectors (2009/10)

Royal Mail employs 190,000 people across 70 Mail Centres and 3,000 Delivery Offices. The size of the business means that it can have dealings with hundreds of local authorities as well as the Health and Safety Executive in their capacity as health and safety enforcing authorities. Royal Mail is entitled to expect consistency from the regulators in the advice tendered, the conduct of inspections and investigations, and in the use of enforcement action, and all interactions should be in accordance with the HSE's [Enforcement Policy Statement](#).

This guidance has been prepared for use by HSE and LA Inspectors who have dealings with Royal Mail Letters and aims to promote consistency in the regulation of health and safety¹.

Inspection

1 Joint inspections between LAs and HSE are encouraged. Regular joint visiting can greatly improve consistency in approach between Inspectors and help ensure a more coherent approach between on-site and off-site issues.

2 Inspections may be conducted unilaterally, or to a schedule e.g. in support of a Local Action Plan.

3 Matters to be considered during inspections will normally include:

- Topics contained in the Local Action Plan (where applicable);
- topics contained in the local Safety Charter (displayed on notice board)
- slips and trips;
- musculoskeletal disorders;
- suitability of risk assessments;
- workplace transport;
- dangerous animals;
- housekeeping;
- remedial action taken following incidents;
- bicycle maintenance;
- violence and aggression against postal workers; and,
- other statutory requirement checks (e.g. first aid, H&S Law Poster, welfare provision etc).

See Appendix 1 for further information on the above topics.

4 Additional project work or current initiatives (e.g. Better Backs, Shattered Lives, European campaigns) may be also be incorporated into inspections where relevant.

¹ Supporting aim 2.5 of the Royal Mail LOP Improvement Plan.

Investigations

5 The reactive investigation of accidents and complaints should be conducted in accordance with existing procedures and remains unaffected by the Local Action Plans or Large Organisations Partnership work.

6 Inspectors should seek to ensure that remedial action arising out of accidents are implemented, this can be verified during inspections. E.g. do Walk Logs reflect the presence of a hazard that was found to have caused a particular accident?

National Level - Large Organisations Partnership (LOP)

7 A goal of the [Large Organisations Partnership](#) is to improve the way that HSE/LAs engage large businesses. We need to engage the organisation at all levels - nationally, regionally and locally, ensuring everyone is participating in the improvement process.

8 To support this work, an Improvement Plan has been introduced. This plan establishes national aims and objectives to deliver improvements in health and safety. The Improvement Plan can be found on the HELA Extranet (HSE Inspectors see EDRM record 2008/558232). The targets relate to management systems and national hazard topics, progress with the plan will be monitored centrally.

Regional Level - Local action plans

9 Regional involvement is achieved through the adoption of Local Action Plans for each Royal Mail Area. The third tranche of Local Action Plans (LAPs) will commence in April 2009 by which time most Royal Mail areas should have participated in the scheme. The methodology for LAPs is described in SIMs [05/2007/04](#) and [05/2008/01](#), and [05/2009/01](#).

Local Level - Safety Charter

10 Each Royal Mail business unit (e.g. a Delivery Office) will agree between 3 and 10 pledges relating to health and safety. These are intended to prompt local workplace discussions on health and safety and are to be agreed following discussions at Work Time Listening and Learning sessions. Inspectors should make enquiries regarding the Safety Charter during their visits.

Inspection and enforcement in Areas not subject to Local Action Plans

11 The enforcement approach should follow-on from previous national inspection work (see SIM [05/2006/04](#)). Where there is evidence of previous advice and there remain significant failings, then enforcement action should be pursued. Having benefited from a 3-year national inspection project, Royal

Mail are now familiar with the necessary standards and should be implementing their own policies and procedures to ensure that the statutory requirements are met.

Service of enforcement notices

12 All enforcement notices should be served on the registered office, with copies being provided for the RM Office Managers, the Area General Manager and Trade Unions locally. The covering letter should be addressed to the Company Secretary, Jonathan Evans, at the registered office (Royal Mail Group Limited, 148 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HQ).

13 Inspections of Royal Mail have been undertaken nationwide for the last 5 years. During that time, LA and HSE Inspectors have repeatedly provided advice and guidance to Royal Mail on the key hazards associated with their undertaking. As a result, there is now an expectation that with regard to certain well known issues, Royal Mail should be demonstrating extensive compliance.

14 Inspectors are asked to consider serving Improvement Notices in situations where:

- Walk risk assessments are absent, or Walk Logs fall far short of recording the significant hazards as described in the Appendix to Walk Logs guide. (Subject to the timescales established in the Local Action Plan).
- Little or no progress has been made towards resolving remedial actions identified by Inspectors during previous visits (where insufficient reason can be provided to substantiate the default).
- Where insufficient progress has been made towards meeting Local Action Plan targets, without reasonable grounds for the delay or inaction. (Details of the relevant targets can be found on the LAP Record Sheet).
- Bicycle maintenance records are absent, or inspections are significantly overdue.
- Following initial compliance with an enforcement notice, matters are found to have subsequently reverted to an unacceptable standard. Under these circumstances a prosecution should also be considered.
- Following a major accident, where reasonably practicable control measures exist, but have not subsequently been implemented or inadequate remedial action has been taken. (E.g. No information provided for employees on the address of a dangerous animal responsible for an attack on a postal worker).

Appendix 1

Slips and Trips

Slips and trips are a causal factor in 40% of Royal Mail's reportable accidents, and unless this topic is successfully addressed then only limited progress can be made in reducing the 5,000 accidents reported annually.

The HSL report "*Slips and Trips in Royal Mail*"² provides some analysis and recommendations from the report are being implemented by Royal Mail where applicable.

A series of Royal Mail awareness events will be held in 2009 to support initiatives aimed at reducing slips/trips. HSE's Slips and Trips Programme Team are supporting this work.

Reducing Slips/trips on delivery:

It is recommended that official shoes be worn on delivery, although this is not yet mandatory. Footwear with overly worn soles or a particularly poor tread profile are not suitable for delivery operations. Pouches should not be over-filled and need to be below the maximum weight of 16 kg (see p.5 for further details). Significant slip/trip hazards encountered on a Walk should be identified and recorded so that other employees may be forewarned. Employees should follow advice to stick to the footpath, avoiding short cuts over unmade ground, grassy slopes, low walls and other obstacles. Employees should be aware of the Severe Weather Policy, and the action to take should it be invoked.

Reducing Slips/Trips in Royal Mail premises:

Strapex and other debris at sorting frames should be placed in bins that are readily accessible. A cleaning regime should be in place, which deals with spillages and ensures that debris is not allowed to accumulate so that it becomes a slip/trip hazard. The absence of bins, or poor housekeeping practices should be questioned.

Walk Risk Assessment

Generally speaking, a more coherent management approach to risk assessment is required. It is a common misconception that a WPQ1 form constitutes a risk assessment. Risk assessment is broader in scope than just Walk Logs or WPQs alone - it is a process. As stand alone items, WPQs do not themselves demonstrate that the process has been completed successfully.

As an employer, Royal Mail needs not only to identify hazards but to take

² <http://intranet/slips/research/ped0611.pdf> , LA Inspectors please contact [LOP Account Manager](#).

suitable steps to remove or control them, and to inform employees of these findings and the necessary precautions they should take. Royal Mail's policy is that WP1 (indoor) and WP2 (outdoor) Hazard Check forms should be used, together with the questionnaires WPQ1,2 and 3. Completion of WP1,2 and WPQ1/2/3 should identify the relevant hazards, but RM also need to demonstrate that the entire process is being conducted successfully and that employees are made aware of the findings, with monitoring and reviews also being conducted.

Managers should be reminded to consider the process as a whole, as described and explained in the Royal Mail guidance file "*Management of Health & Safety, Risk Assessment*", and to consider all occupational hazards including engineering, motor vehicle repair, maintenance work etc.

It is vitally important that hazards on delivery are accurately identified and recorded, and that Walk Logs are an accurate reflection of the physical characteristics of a Walk. There has been some deliberation over what level of detail should be recorded, and as to what constitutes a 'significant hazard'. Following discussions, these issues have been addressed in the "Appendix to Walk Logs".

The following guidance is available:

- Joint Royal Mail/HSE Guidance Note on Walk Risk Assessment
- Talkabout: Safety
- Appendix to Walk Logs

Musculoskeletal Disorders – Maximum Bag Weights

Pouch Weights (16 kg):

Royal Mail has core safety standards governing the maximum weight for delivery pouches:

Max Pouch Weights	
Level ground (less than 1:12 slope)	16 kg
Advisory Terrain Adjustments:	
Greater than 1:12 slope	8 kg.
Greater than 1:8 slope (or mostly stairs)	5 kg
Young persons under 18	10 kg
On a bicycle	16 kg

Regular monitoring should be carried out by management to ensure that the core standards are being applied. Pouch weight record sheets should be available to demonstrate that the management system is effective. Casual workers should also receive training to enable them to do their work safely.

To account for fatigue, the matrix below provides guideline weights for subsequent deliveries.

Pouch number	Recommended weight	Cumulative total
1 st	16 kg	16 kg
2 nd	16 kg	32 kg
3 rd	12 kg	44 kg
4 th	10 kg	54 kg

Trials are taking place in North & East London and South & West Wales for a new standard of 16kg and 11kg for all pouches thereafter. As yet, these trials are incomplete and the matrix should be used by preference in all other areas.

Mail Bags (11 kg):

The weight of mail bags varies widely, but the maximum weight is **11 kg**. Some are very light and can easily be lifted with one hand, but others require more careful handling. The weight of bags should be tested before handling. Overweight mail bags should be reported so that they can be traced to source, before being broken down to a more manageable weight. Containers and trolleys should be used to transport mail bags over any reasonable distance. Drop Bag Fittings should be arranged so that the higher volume bags are towards the edges of the frame to prevent reaching for heavy loads.

Workplace Transport

Accidents involving transport have a high potential to result in fatal injury. The movement of fork-lift trucks, Heavy Goods Vehicles, vans, cars and cycles may all pose a threat to pedestrians. Traffic and pedestrian routes should be provided, and the new Yard Risk Assessments format to be adopted from the end of January 2009 (see LOP Improvement Plan target 2.6). The new Yard Risk Assessment process will introduce prioritised plans for improvement.

Reversing operations should be avoided where at all possible, but carefully managed where it is unavoidable. Docking procedures should be in place and adhered to.

Management should check that those employees who use private vehicles on delivery have the necessary documentation (valid driving licence, insurance, and MOT if applicable). Private vehicles used by employees may cause Yard congestion if not properly managed. Parking areas at the Delivery/Sorting Office need to be clearly indicated, and arrangements for the public considered.

Public access arrangements for collections should be carefully considered, as this may involve crossing busy vehicle routes.

It is Royal Mail policy that all cyclists are required to wear cycle helmets and Safety Wear. Panniers should not be overloaded.

Dangerous Animals

The number of cases of dog attacks being reported by NHS accident and emergency units has increased by 40% over the last 5 years, with 3,800 people needing emergency treatment last year alone. Royal Mail delivery staff are particularly at risk and animal attacks account for 7% of their RIDDOR reportable incidents.

Royal Mail's National Safety Steering Group is currently examining this topic, and reviewing the Dangerous Animals Policy to see if it needs to be revised. Without pre-empting the findings of the Steering Group, the following advice can be offered:

- Locations of known aggressive animals should be recorded and brought to the attention of delivery staff.
- Owners of aggressive animals should be contacted by RM managers following any incidents.
- All staff should be aware of the Dangerous Animals Policy and understand what they need to do. During inspections, ask for a copy of the policy and make inquiries to see if incidents are being reported, recorded and followed up.
- Wherever possible, attempts should be made to develop a working relationship with LA Dog Wardens, and to obtain information on the location of dangerous animals. Likewise, Royal Mail should notify the LA if they have identified addresses or locations where dangerous animals can be found.
- Royal Mail should conduct Work Time Listening & Learning (WTLL) sessions on how to handle aggressive dogs.
- Stickers to highlight dangerous locations on Walk Logs or frames.

Bicycle Maintenance

Royal Mail has 33,000 bicycles that are used to assist in delivery, one of the largest fleets of bikes in Europe. Keeping these bicycles in a safe, roadworthy condition requires a methodical maintenance regime to be adopted, and adequate resourcing of time, equipment and staff to ensure the work is conducted on time and to the correct standard.

In some areas, the Mechanic's role is not a full-time position with time split between other operational tasks. Inspectors should ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated to bicycle maintenance and that Bicycle Mechanics are not constantly regarded as a 'spare pair of hands'.

Maintenance records vary locally, but the Royal Mail Bicycle Maintenance Manual stipulates that all cycles should be subject to Scheduled Inspection and Service at least once a year. Maintenance records should record the work undertaken and review dates etc (this is in addition to daily user checks).

Information for cyclists may be added to the Walk Logs where relevant (e.g. busy road junctions, cycle routes, hidden entrances etc).

Violence and Aggression

Unfortunately, facing violence and aggression can be a problem for postal workers. Staff on delivery are most vulnerable, but collection drivers and staff in enquiry offices are also potentially at risk. Incidents may arise as the result of attempted robbery, disputes with members of the public or colleagues, and road rage. Incidents that result in injuries will be reported under RIDDOR, and investigated by the Police, but it is important that any incidents are reported and recorded. Under reporting of violence and aggression can undermine attempts to tackle the problem.

Royal Mail has issued guidance material under the “Walk Safe” campaign. This guidance should be available in local offices and the contents discussed with employees. An electronic copy of the Walk Safe guidance can be obtained from the LOP Account Manager (HSE Inspectors see TRIM Ref: 2008/18901).

Stickers applied to Walk Logs and frames can be used to highlight addresses or locations where incidents may occur. A Walk Threat Risk Assessment may be required for walks where incidents have occurred or violence has been highlighted as a concern on WPQ1/2 forms. Managers may also write to customers and suspend delivery if necessary.

Remedial Action following Incidents

Inspectors should take the opportunity during visits to verify that incidents have been investigated and that remedial action has been taken where necessary. For example, Inspectors may check the accident book for any dog attacks, and then ask to see the relevant Walk Log to ensure that a warning has been applied, and confirm with the Manager that a letter has been sent to the owner. Likewise for other serious accidents that would require follow-up action to be taken to prevent a re-occurrence.

Further Advice

Information on any of these topics or general advice on health and safety management within Royal Mail can be obtained by contacting the [LOP Account Manager](#) (Royal Mail), Health and Safety Executive, City Gate West, Toll House Hill, Nottingham, NG1 5AT.